



SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

CONTACT: SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS 316-660-9370 FAX: 316-383-7509

December 21, 2005

Contact: Kristi Zukovich
316-660-9370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sedgwick County Health Department Reports Pertussis Cases

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – There have been more Pertussis (Whooping Cough) cases in Sedgwick County this year than in the past ten years. This year, there are 139 confirmed, probable or suspect cases of Pertussis in Sedgwick County, 32 in the month of December alone.

There are a number of reasons for the increase in cases. First, testing capabilities for Pertussis have improved. Second, Pertussis outbreaks happen periodically. The last local outbreak was in 1998, with 82 cases. Third, the immunity provided by vaccination decreases over time, and therefore boosters are needed. And finally, physicians are doing more lab testing to confirm the disease.

What are we doing about Pertussis?

Pertussis is a reportable disease, meaning that the labs and physician offices report all cases to the Health Department. Investigators (epidemiologists) contact the patient and the physician to identify close contacts (friends and family) and assure that everyone who needs medication receives it. If the patient is a student, the Health Department works with the school nurse to make sure that all students and parents receive

-- more --

information, especially about immunizations and Pertussis prevention. Anyone who is diagnosed with Pertussis must take at least five days of antibiotics and will be excluded from school or work for the full five days.

How can Pertussis be prevented?

All children who enter public school are required to receive Pertussis (DTaP) vaccinations. The vaccinations are provided in a series of five shots that are recommended at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 12-18 months and between ages 4-6 years. Additionally, earlier this year the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that adolescents aged 11-18 years receive one of the two newly licensed Tdap vaccines (Tetanus and Diphtheria and Pertussis, called Boostrix or Adacel) in place of the currently recommended Td (Tetanus and Diphtheria) booster. These vaccines are newly licensed in the United States for use in adolescents or adults and should help reduce the increasing burden of pertussis in adolescents. There is also an immunization (Adacel) for Pertussis available for adults through the age of 65. All pertussis vaccines for all ages are available at the Sedgwick County Health Department.

Additionally, prevention of Pertussis includes frequent handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes. "Handwashing" and "Cover Your Cough" posters are available on the Sedgwick County website, www.sedgwickcounty.org.

-- end --